

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

HA-05 EUR-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SY-05 MCT-01 /092 W

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R 022004Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 291

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LIMA 4800

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PE SHUM

SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS: DETENTIONS, DEPORTATIONS AND THE POLITICAL
PROCESS; DISCUSSION WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER

SUMMARY. I RAISED WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER OUR CONCERN
OVER THE RECENT PUBLIC ORDER MEASURES AND THE THREAT TO
THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. HE ARGUED THAT THE GOP HAD
REACTED PRUDENTLY AND MODERATELY TO ORGANIZED SUBVERSION.
HE ALLEGED THAT GENERAL(R) RODRIGUEZ FIGUEROA AND HIS
RETIRED MILITARY COHORTS SOUGHT TO OVERTHROW MORALES
BERMUDEZ. THE FOREIGN MINISTER EMPHASIZED THE GOVERNMENT'S
COMMITMENT TO HOLD ELECTIONS AS SCHEDULED. WE BELIEVE THE
GOP'S PRIMARY CONCERN IS RODRIGUEZ'S PSR WHICH THE RANKING
MILITARY SEE NOT AS A LEGITIMATE POLITICAL PARTY, BUT AS
AN INSTRUMENT TO BRING DOWN THE OFFICERS NOW IN POWER AND
REPLACE THEM WITH A GROUP TIED TO THE POLICIES OF THE
VELASCO REGIME. IT DOES NOT APPEAR AT THE MOMENT THAT
THE GOP INTENDS TO INTENSIFY REPRESSION. WE WILL CON-
TINUE TO MAKE EVIDENT OUR CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND
A FREE ELECTORAL PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

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1. DE LA PUENTE AND I DISCUSSED THESE MATTERS AT SOME
LENGTH DURING A PRIVATE MEETING ON MAY 31. THE MINISTER
SAID HE WAS AWARE OF CONCERN ABROAD AND ON THE PART OF
THE USG WITH RESPECT TO THE GOP'S RECENT ACTIONS TO PUT
DOWN "SUBVERSION". BUT HE THOUGHT THAT CONCERN A RESULT
OF "MISUNDERSTANDING" OF THE TRUE SITUATION. THE MINISTER

CONTENDED THAT THE DISTURBANCES OF MAY 22-23 WERE ORGANIZED AND ORCHESTRATED AS A DELIBERATE EFFORT TO BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT. THERE WAS NO CHOICE BUT TO RESPOND WITH FIRM MEASURES.

2. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTIONS DE LA PUENTE ASSERTED THAT THE PLOT SHOWED MILITARY PLANNING AND WAS MASTER-MINDED BY RODRIGUEZ FIGUEROA AND HIS FRIENDS. THE SECURITY FORCES HAD FOUND PARA-MILITARY GROUPS IN ACTION; ARMS CACHES WERE DISCOVERED IN VILLA SALVADOR AND OTHER SLUM AREAS; ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO CUT POWER AND COMMUNICATIONS COMING INTO LIMA, A TACTIC RESPONSIVE TO MILITARY DOCTRINE. THE MINISTER ALSO CHARGED THAT FOREIGNERS, INCLUDING "BLONDS", HAD BEEN OBSERVED PARTICIPATING IN DISTURBANCES. SOME OF THESE WERE "RUSSIANS AND CUBANS". ADDITIONALLY, THE GOP HAS PURPORTEDLY DISCOVERED THE INFILTRATION INTO PERU OF ARGENTINE AND "TUPAMARA" TERRORISTS. AND, DE LA PUENTE SAID, THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL ABORTIVE ATTEMPTS (ATENTADOS) AGAINST MINISTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT.

3. I ASKED WHAT THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF ALL THIS MIGHT BE. THE MINISTER SAID THAT RODRIGUEZ FIGUEROA AND HIS ALLIES ON THE FAR LEFT MEANT TO CREATE CHAOS AND PROVOKE A MILITARY COUP AGAINST MORALES BERMUDEZ. HE INSISTED THAT THE PLOT WAS WIDESPREAD AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S CONFIDENTIAL

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REACTION HAD BEEN PRUDENT. FOR EXAMPLE, HIS OWN PRE-DECESSOR, GENERAL DE LA FLOR, HAS NOT BEEN TOUCHED ALTHOUGH HE WAS HEAVILY INVOLVED IN THE PLOTTING. DE LA PUENTE FEARED THAT MAY 22-23 WAS ONLY AN INITIAL "TEST" AND THAT MORE SERIOUS AND PROLONGED SUBVERSIVE EFFORTS MIGHT BE IN THE OFFING.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LIMA 4800

4. I SAID THERE COULD BE NO REASONABLE COMPLAINT ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT DEFENDING ITSELF AGAINST SUBVERSION BUT THAT WE LOOKED FOR THE GOP TO PURSUE A MODERATE COURSE. I OBSERVED THAT UNTIL LAST WEEK THE PERUVIAN POLITICAL PROCESS HAD BEEN NOTABLE FOR THE WIDE FREEDOM OF SELF-EXPRESSION AND PARTICIPATION ENJOYED BY ALL POLITICAL GROUPS FROM RIGHT TO LEFT. I RECALLED MY COMMENT TO THE SECRETARY IN WASHINGTON THAT EVERYONE WAS TO HAVE HIS CHANCE IN THE ELECTIONS HERE. IT SEEMED TO ME A GREAT SHAME THAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PROCESS HAD BEEN SO ABRUPTLY INTERRUPTED. THE MINISTER AGREED THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE BUT ASSERTED AGAIN THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO CHOICE. HE SAID THAT AT THIS MOMENT THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE FIRM, BOTH IN ITS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POLICIES.

5. WITH RESPECT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THOSE DETAINED AND DEPORTED, DE LA PUENTE CALLED MY ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT NO ONE HAS DISAPPEARED OR BEEN SHOT "WHILE ESCAPING". HE SAID THE PRESIDENT OPPOSES VIOLENCE AND THAT THE PERUVIAN MILITARY ARE NOT "DISPOSED" TO USE
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SUCH METHODS. I SAID THE MINISTER COULD UNDERSTAND IN THAT CONTEXT THE CONCERN IN WASHINGTON AND ELSEWHERE BY RECALLING WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. DE LA PUENTE CONCEDED THE POINT. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS CONCERNED BY THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE DEPORTEES IN ARGENTINA WOULD BE TARGETED BY EXTREME RIGHTISTS, HAD SPOKEN TO THE PRESIDENT ABOUT HIS CONCERN, AND MIGHT GET IN TOUCH WITH THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE ON THIRD-COUNTRY SANCTUARY. I SAID THAT SEEMED A GOOD IDEA, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL OF THE GROUP, SUCH AS HUGO BLANCO, COULD PRESUMABLY RETURN WITHOUT MUCH TROUBLE TO THE HAVENS THEY LEFT ONLY WEEKS AGO.

6. I ASKED THE MINISTER HOW HE SAW THE PROSPECTS FOR THE JUNE 18 ELECTION. DE LA PUENTE SAID THE GOVERN-

MENT INTENDED TO GO AHEAD AND THAT HE EXPECTED THE ELECTIONS TO COME OFF AS SCHEDULED. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE PARTIES WITH DEPORTED CANDIDATES MIGHT BE PERMITTED TO OFFER SUBSTITUTES. HE DODGED MY QUESTION ON RELAXING THE STATE OF SIEGE, SAYING ONLY THAT WE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE. IN CLOSING I REITERATED OUR HOPE FOR A MODERATE GOP COURSE AND A RESUMPTION IN THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION.

7. COMMENT: IT IS DIFFICULT TO TAKE THE MINISTER'S MORE SENSATIONAL ASSERTIONS ABOUT THE GREAT SUBVERSIVE PLOT VERY SERIOUSLY. HE, AFTER ALL, IS ONLY REPEATING WHAT HE HEARS FROM THE MILITARY WHO, IN TURN, WANT THEIR FOREIGN MINISTER TO PUT THE BEST FACE POSSIBLE ON THE SITUATION. THE PATTERN IS ALSO DISTRESSINGLY FAMILIAR, AS IN THE CASE OF THE "FOREIGN AGITATORS" WHO IN MY EXPERIENCE ALWAYS SEEM TO TURN UP IN LATIN AMERICA WHEN THINGS START GOING BADLY. BUT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT

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SOME OF THE INCIDENTS DURING MAY 22-23 WERE CAREFULLY ORGANIZED WITH SERIOUS INTENT TO VIOLENCE. AND THE SUSPICION THAT LEONIDAS RODRIGUEZ AND HIS FRIENDS ARE MORE INTERESTED IN OVERTHROWING MORALES THAN IN FREE ELECTIONS DOES NOT SEEM UNREASONABLE.

8. IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY CONCERN IS WITH RODRIGUEZ AND THE PSR. THERE WAS OPPOSITION WITHIN THE MILITARY FROM THE OUTSET TO ALLOWING HIM TO RETURN. SOME OF THE GENERALS, AND THE NAVY IN PARTICULAR, SEE THE PSR NOT AS A LEGITIMATE POLITICAL PARTY, BUT AS AN INSTRUMENT OF GOLPISMO TO BE USED TO OUST THOSE NOW IN POWER AND RESTORE GENERALS AND ADMIRALS DEDICATED TO THE POLICIES OF THE FIRST PHASE. (IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT RETIRED ADMIRAL DELLEPIANE, VELASCO'S STRIDENT MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SUDDENLY AND PUBLICLY RESIGNED FROM THE PSR ON THE EVE OF THE DEPORTATIONS. PRESUMABLY HE WAS TIPPED OFF.) I UNDERSTAND THAT THE RANKING MILITARY WERE PARTICULARLY DISTURBED BY THE RETURN OF MAJORS(R) FERNANDEZ SALVATECCHI AND VILLACREZ RIQUELME WITH RODRIGUEZ. THESE CASHIERED OFFICERS HAVE BEEN RUMORED TO BE IN TOUCH WITH LIKE-MINDED OFFICERS STILL ON ACTIVE SERVICE. FEAR OF A COUP AND CONCERN FOR THE UNITY OF THE ARMY PROBABLY THEN HAS HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE GOP'S POST-MAY 23 REACTIONS.

9. THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S REMARK ABOUT FIRMNESS ON BOTH THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FRONTS WAS ALSO SIGNIFICANT. FEELING THEMSELVES FORCED TO TAKE THE BITTER MEDICINE PRESCRIBED BY THE IMF, AND HAVING FINALLY SWALLOWED IT

AFTER SO MANY MONTHS OF AGONIZING, MORALES AND HIS COLLEAGUES WOULD UNDERSTANDABLY SEEK TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF STRENGTH AND AUTHORITY. AND IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT VERY MUCH TEMPORIZING WITH THE CGTP AND THE PSR WOULD HAVE COLLAPSED THE AUSTERITY PROGRAM IN SHORT ORDER.

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10. AT THIS POINT I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE PRESIDENT INTENDS TO EXTEND OR INTENSIFY THE REPRESSION SIGNIFICANTLY. THERE WILL BE A FEW MORE DEPORTATIONS IF THE SECURITY FORCES CAN MANAGE TO LAY THEIR HANDS ON RODRIGUEZ, AVELINO MAR, AND THE OTHER GUGITIVES. BUT WE WOULD EXPECT AT LEAST THE GRADUAL RELEASE OF MOST OF THE DETAINEES IF THE GOP CONTINUES TO MOVE TOWARD ELECTIONS. THIS COULD ALL CHANGE QUICKLY OF COURSE IF THE LEFT WERE TO TRY ANOTHER GENERAL STRIKE SOON OR THE JUNE 18 ELECTIONS WERE TO BE ABORTED.

11. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE MANIFEST OUR INTEREST IN RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND A FREE ELECTORAL PROCESS. IN A BRIEF SPEECH I GAVE AT AN AID LOAN SIGNING CEREMONY ON MAY 31 I SAID: "THE DIFFICULTIES PERU FACES AT THE MOMENT ARE SERIOUS. BUT WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT PERUVIAN DEDICATION TO DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL DEMOCRATIZATION WILL NOT FALTER -- AND MY GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO OFFER ITS COOPERATION IN THE SPIRIT OF THAT DEDICATION." THOSE SENTENCES APPEARED THE NEXT MORNING IN ALL THE LEADING NEWSPAPERS. SHLAUDEMAM

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